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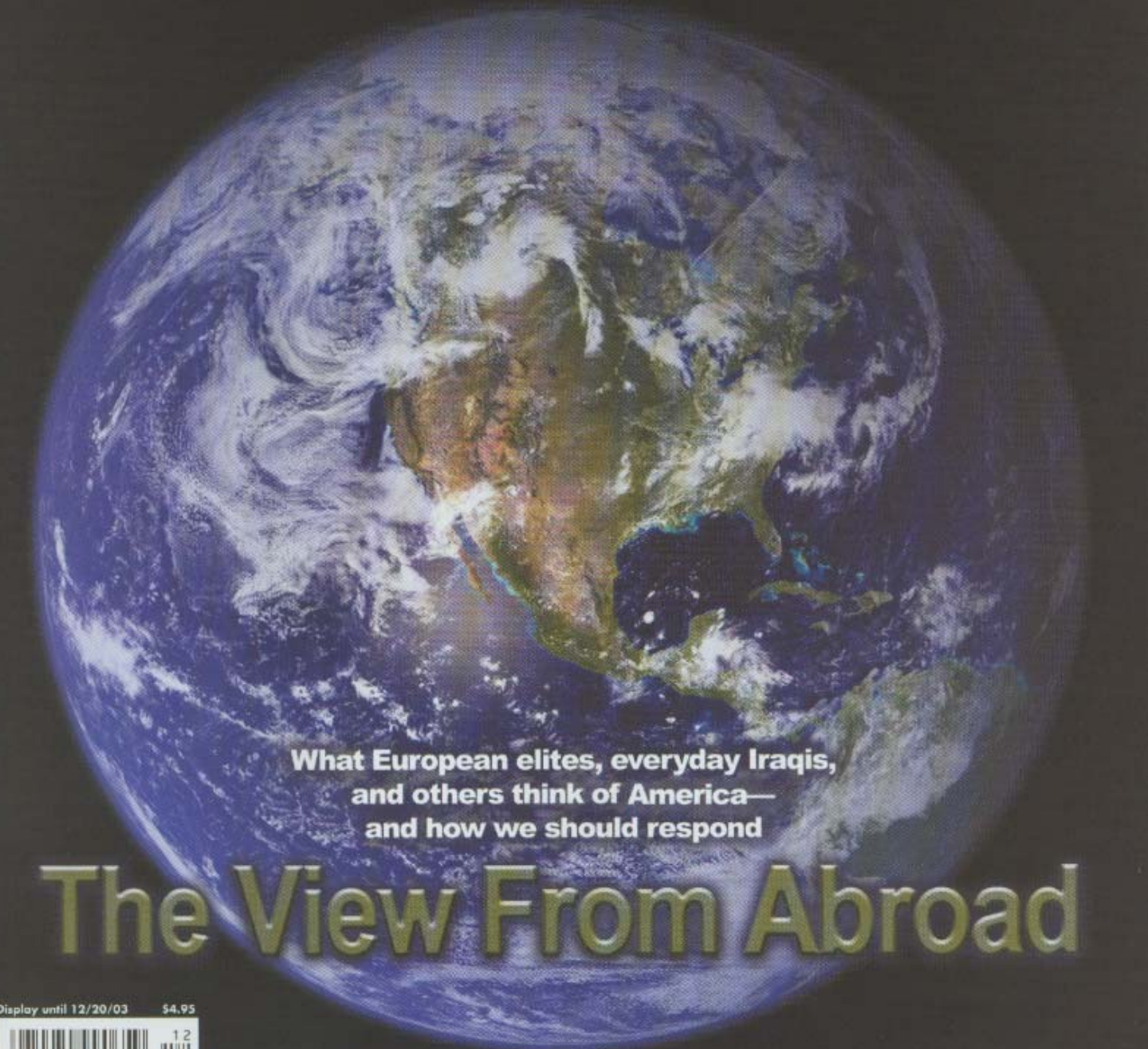

What European elites, everyday Iraqis, and others think of America— and how we should respond

The View From Abroad

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"Live with TAE"

A warfighting specialist argues that globalization, far from being a problem, is actually the best cure for poverty, oppression, war, and—ultimately—terror.

Thomas Barnett

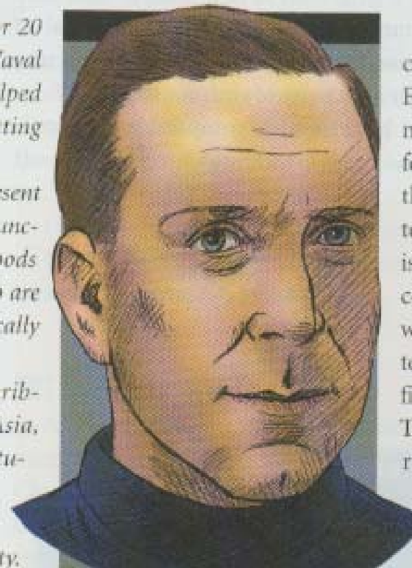
As an adviser to the Secretary of Defense for 20 months following the September 11 attacks, Naval War College professor Thomas Barnett helped draw up our government's plans for prosecuting the War on Terror.

His primary insight was to divide the present nations of the world into two categories: a "Functioning Core" that exchanges ideas and goods globally, and a "Non-integrating" group who are isolated from other countries both economically and in the realm of ideas.

The non-integrating countries in the Caribbean, the Balkans, the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Middle East, much of South Asia, and virtually all of Africa are home to 2 billion people, and are characterized by political instability, cultural rigidity, and extreme poverty. Not coincidentally, these nations are where the vast majority of military conflicts have sprung up in recent decades.

Barnett argues that the real root of oppression, war, and terror in these countries is their lack of economic, intellectual, and political connections to the rest of the globe. He says the transformation of Iraq should be part of a larger effort to open all of these societies to globalized communication and trade, which he refers to as "shrinking the gap."

Thomas Barnett spoke with TAE senior editor Daniel Kennelly.



It is countries lacking economic and cultural links to the rest of the globe that are producing war and terrorism.

TAE: Tell us how you developed the concept of connectivity as an important factor in international relations.

BARNETT: I began with a simple set of observations. I plotted on a map all the places where we've sent U.S. military forces since the end of the Cold War. Through 2002 that was 132 cases. Then I asked, "What is it about these particular places that continues to demand attention from U.S. military forces?"

Basically, it became evident that these are the countries having trouble with globalization. Either they lack the stability to attract investment, have repressive political leadership, or suffer under a system that restricts their contact with the rest of the world. When you put this all together the picture becomes clear: Today, danger is defined by disconnectedness. The disconnected countries are where you'll find instability. That's where you'll find threats to the international system and the global economy. That's where you'll find the transnational terrorist networks.

TAE: How specifically should the United States respond to this phenomenon?

BARNETT: One of the things we've done right is to begin to move our forces to new places. Since the end of the Cold War, we've shut down roughly 150 military bases in the U.S., Europe, and developed Asia. And something like two dozen new bases have been added inside or near the non-integrating countries, the bulk of them in Southwest Asia. That process needs to continue and go further.

More fundamentally, we need to understand that it's not enough to try to catch every terrorist at the border. The only way to make terrorism go away is by eradicating the conflicts, tensions, and lack of opportunities that drive young men in the Middle East to lash out against us. I don't like to put it in terms of "hearts and minds." I don't hold much hope of changing people's minds through cajoling, and I don't believe you can impose democracy. What I think you *can* do is encourage economic and cultural connectivity.

When you encourage connections to other parts of the globe, you allow people more options for information, for self-expression, for financial opportunity. I trust connectivity to lead countries down the pathway toward pluralism. I don't

dream of democracy in the Middle East. I dream of lots more connections between the Middle Eastern public and the outside world.

And once that process begins, it's very hard to choke off. Over time, you see economic opportunities percolate into demands for political pluralism, as is the case in China already. All we need to do in situations where this kind of connectivity is emerging is to prevent the rise of those who seek to disrupt the connections, those who would take particular countries or regions off line. Where people who would hold countries or regions hostage in a semi-isolated situation already exist, we need to hasten their exit.

It's no surprise that the "axis of evil" countries tend to be some of the most isolated countries. They hold back their own citizens (whose dissatisfaction tends to extend beyond their own borders), and they also hold back other countries in the neighborhood that fear being called, say, a "bad Islamic state," or a puppet of the United States.

TAE: The hot war in Iraq is over now, and it was a resounding victory for the U.S. military, but the reconstruction effort so far has proceeded in fits and starts. Should the current guerilla war and resistance give us pause in our efforts to bring isolated countries back into the global flow?

BARNETT: Nothing we've seen in Iraq so far should be surprising in terms of the fierceness of the resistance. I expected remnants of the old regime to fight to the end. They had a privileged status which was built on a principle that can be seen again and again throughout the non-integrating countries—an elite that controls its population by limiting its connectedness with the outside world. They will assassinate people and go after so-called collaborators with the U.S. They will do anything to stop the connectivity that will naturally ensue when an airport opens up or when there are 6 million cell phones in Iraq three years from now.

But once established, connectivity will make it extremely difficult to resume tyrannical control. We ought to portray ourselves not just as a force for democracy or for capitalism, but more fundamentally as a force for connectivity. We want to see Iraq's economy, society, and its citizens linked to the outside world as much as possible.

TAE: But we are not yet certain of the degree to which the Iraqi people themselves want to open up. Is the greater danger that the opening of Iraq will move too slowly, breeding resentment against the occupation, or that it will proceed too quickly, causing Iraqis to feel disoriented?

BARNETT: The change will have to respect local traditions. It can't be pollutive in the sense of trucking in pornography or anything else that would be destabilizing. Connectivity gives choice, and choice can be challenging. What we want is for these countries to foster connectivity but be strong enough to channel and deal with it in such a way that their societies don't feel like they're drinking from a fire hose. The Shah failed to do that in Iran. The Chinese, on the other hand, have been very skillful. They're letting the world in, but they're letting it in on their terms, without ripping up traditional structures.

Once Iraq is linked with the rest of the world, the hopes and dreams of those who want to take it back to the seventh century will quickly evaporate. But we have to be patient.

TAE: What does this mean for the U.S. strategy of aiming for an Iraqi constitution and transfer of power fairly early on? Is a quick pullout feasible?

BARNETT: The pressure now is to go as fast as possible, because we need to show results to the Iraqi people and the international community. The upshot is going to be that it will be a violent, tumultuous, and scary place, probably for a while.

Iraq needs two or three peaceful political transitions. In my upcoming book, *The Pentagon's New Map: War and Peace in the Twenty-first Century*, I note that one third of non-integrated countries tend to rotate their leadership too often. The other two thirds have leaders that stay in power too long.

You can understand why investment doesn't flow easily to these countries. If leaders are changing every two to three years, and economic and political rules change with them, international investors will stay far away. The flip side is when a long-serving ruler begins to treat the economy like his personal possession, so the only way to cut a deal is to go to the presidential palace and line the pockets of the ruling family with bribes. That hurt Iraq badly.

TAE: Recent polling data collected in Iraq by *The American Enterprise* and Zogby International suggest that Iraqis see political reconstruction as a far more difficult task than economic

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reconstruction. In light of this assessment by everyday Iraqis, what should our priority be?

BARNETT: Everything that has to do with economic connectivity should be pursued as fast as possible. We have to be patient with the politics and give it some leeway. It is going to take at least a decade before people accept the idea that a leader can come into power, leave, and let somebody else come in, and that their whole world won't change as a result of new leadership. As this process develops slowly, economic integration can proceed apace.

TAE: It's clear from our military victory this spring that America's light, agile, and lethal forces are quite able to take down a regime. It's less clear that these same forces are ideally suited for a protracted occupation. If we're talking about a decade-long process in Iraq, doesn't this imply changes to our force structure?

BARNETT: Absolutely. We're facing a bifurcation of our military needs into two very different tasks. One is the "takedown" force which we saw at work this spring in Iraq. On the other side is a large constabulary force.

But this is not readily accepted in the Pentagon. After all, in Kosovo and Afghanistan we changed governments without even using our army much. We achieved "drive-by regime changes" with just air strikes and Special Forces. With our current forces, we could do five or six Iraq takedowns a year. But we don't have the military needed to do an occupation.

The present Department of Defense was created for a war against the Soviet Union. When the Soviet threat went away we didn't revise that model, we just reduced it proportionally. If it weren't for September 11, we would still be fixated on fighting a major high-tech war against China in the Straits of Taiwan in the year 2025.

That goes against my basic principle that danger now exists in the parts of the world that are disconnected from the global economy or seeking to go off line. China is of course rapidly integrating itself into the global economy.

TAE: The creation of a constabulary force separate from a warfighting force seems like a major innovation. How will we manage such a large step?

BARNETT: Well, it is a large step, but you can argue that a bifurcation of this sort was historically the norm for this country. For the first 150 years of our history, we had a flexible, less lethal military force called the Department of the Navy. And then we had the Department of War, which we didn't activate except for major conflict. These forces were merged in the Defense Act of 1947 to battle the Soviets. Now I can see the bifurcation returning.

Over time, economic connections percolate into demands for political pluralism. So all we need to do is fight those who would hijack societies and unhook them from the global economy.

TAE: What are Iraq's prospects for economic development and integration into the global economy? Is getting its oil industry operational sufficient to achieve that?

BARNETT: No. Historically, countries develop the slowest when they rely on export of raw materials. And over-reliance on one resource makes a country more susceptible to the rise of elites who control the masses by controlling these resources. The Middle East is a place where there is a lot of wealth, but not much development, because the resource wealth is controlled by elites. And these rich elites produce kids with an expectation of hereditary rule who behave badly. That's Osama bin Laden in a nutshell.

The economic reconstruction in Iraq has to encourage people to pursue long-term aspirations, like higher education, with the expectation of seeing their efforts pay off through new opportunities in their home country. In Saudi Arabia, despite its wealth, even if you put in ten years of education you will be lucky to find a good job. More likely you will have to leave your country, your family, your culture, and everything you know, and go live abroad, and that's hard. Some polling done for the U.N. indicated that in some Arab countries as much as half of the young people want to leave the country. That is stunning.

In an increasingly smaller world, we will be living with violence and terror unless we open up the world's bad neighborhoods to economic opportunity. We have to fight those who would hijack societies and disconnect them from the global economy. We have to accept some emigrants from aspiring countries. But more important, we need to accept their imports and help them get on a sensible development path.